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NATIONAL IDEALS AND EDUCATIONAL POLICY.

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SCHOOL DISTRICTS ARE URGED TO PURSUE DESEGREGATION AND COMPENSATORY EDUCATION PROGRAMS SIMULTANEOUSLY RATHER THAN FOLLOWING ONLY ONE OF THESE TWO ACTIVITIES. COMPENSATORY EDUCATION, WHATEVER ITS IMMEDIATE VALUES, IS SEEN AS ONLY A PARTIAL MEASURE. EXAMPLES OF COMMUNITY RESPONSIBILITY COMBINED WITH FEDERAL FUNDS ARE GIVEN. FUNDAMENTAL PROPOSITIONS LISTED ARE (1) LOCAL BOARDS OF EDUCATION MUST ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR USING ALL RESOURCES AT THEIR COMMAND (FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL) TO IMPROVE EDUCATION AND REDUCE SEGREGATION. (2) STATE DEPARTMENTS OF EDUCATION MUST BEGIN TO ACCEPT MORE RESPONSIBILITY FOR SCHOOL DESEGREGATION AS THEY DEVELOP GREATER CAPACITY FOR IMPROVING QUALITY. (3) THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT MUST CONTINUE THE VIGOROUS CARRYING OUT OF TITLE IV AND VI OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT. THIS ADDRESS WAS PRESENTED BEFORE THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON RACE AND EDUCATION (WASHINGTON, D.C., NOV. 17, 1967). (AF)

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NATIONAL IDEALS AND EDUCATIONAL POLICY*

An Address by Harold Howe II
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The Old Testament tells us that the sins of fathers are visited on their sons. Presuming for the moment that this lugubrious sentiment is valid, it seems to me it ought to be amended to include virtues as well; the United States has been suffering for almost two centuries now from the idealism of the Founding Fathers.

The particular ideals I have in mind are stated, among other places, in the second sentence of the Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal,..."

Having enunciated those familiar words, I realize that I run the risk of exciting your irritation. You may suspect that they are the prelude to a superficially patriotic sermon, a hearty injunction for all of us to stop this silly bickering and remember that we are all brothers.

These words are a prelude to something, of course, but not--I hope--to a set of simplistic pieties. The problems of achieving equal opportunity in education or in any other aspect of our national life are much too complex to be resolved by mere good feeling. I quote these words as much out of desperation as conviction. Desperation because, wondering whether there is anything new to say about race and education, I thought

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*Before the National Conference on Race and Education, sponsored by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, at the Shoreham Hotel, Washington, D.C., 12:30 p.m., Friday, November 17, 1967

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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I'd explore something old. And conviction because it seems to me that perhaps our national ideals--apart from furnishing us with some memorable prose--have a more definite function and force than is commonly supposed.

One of the consequences of discovering, as most of us do, that ideals have often been ignored or exploited in the past is to make one wonder whether they have any value at all. Are they merely a decorative wallpaper to spruce up a society's house, or do they keep out some heat and cold as well? Are they simply graceful formulations handy for cloaking a Nation's pragmatic self-interest in the garments of justice and virtue--or do they contain within them, perhaps to a degree we cannot measure, some philosophical and psychological energies that help explain a Nation's present strength?

Such speculations are inevitable, and every responsible citizen must engage in them. One possibility is to conclude that ideals are indeed little more than baubles, tinseled stars for the naive to aim their hearts at while the canny movers and shakers of the real world get the work done. Another possibility is to conclude that, while ideals are rarely realized in their fulness, the exercise of attempting to achieve them renews a society's strength--and that a Nation which turns its back on high aspirations does so at peril of increasing weakness.

This matter of equality has been giving us trouble ever since the Declaration of Independence was published. Every succeeding generation has tried to figure out, in the context of its own times, what our forefathers meant by stating that "All men are created equal." Since common observation tells us the reverse every day, we have concluded that only

in a special sense can all men be considered equals. Broadly stated, it means that as Americans they are entitled to equality under the law in preserving life and liberty, and in seeking happiness.

Yet even that restricted formulation has given us trouble. At one time, a person's right to all the privileges of American citizenship hinged on ownership of property, and at another, on sex: it took us more than a century to decide that women could vote.

So it is clear that defining equality in the United States has been an evolutionary process, one by which we have erased one special characteristic after another from the list of criteria for full citizenship. The notion of "equality" has never been static and fixed for us. Time and circumstance have forced us to revise past definitions. In this political sense, therefore, the United States is as much a developing Nation as the newest member of the United Nations.

Without question, the single characteristic that has given us the most trouble throughout this enterprise is that of race. The thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth amendments started the job, but we have not finished it yet. We are here to consider how much remains to be done, and how to go about it, particularly in the schools. This conference proceeds from two facts: first, equality before the law, the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, is meaningless without an equal right to an excellent education; second , for an American citizen, segregated education cannot be excellent.

Thirteen years ago, the Supreme Court recognized the intrinsic relationship between equality of education and equality of citizenship when it decided that segregated education is of its nature unequal, and decreed that desegregation of schools should proceed with "all deliberate speed."

As has often been remarked, the implementation of this decision has been characterized more by deliberation than by speed. And yet, despite the snail's pace of school desegregation, the snail has slowly picked up speed as parents, civil rights groups, and the courts have begun enforcing the 1954 decision. Since 1964 the Civil Rights Act has provided a basis for further efforts. Three years ago, in the Old South and border States, less than two percent of the 3½ million Negro youngsters had any white classmates at all. Since then we have multiplied that figure by more than eight times, to more than 16 percent.

More important for the future of desegregation, the Federal judiciary this year backed the position taken by the Departments of Justice and Health, Education, and Welfare that measurable progress is the sole test of a desegregation plan. This ruling means that school districts will no longer be able to use freedom-of-choice desegregation plans as a basis for compliance with the Civil Rights Act unless such plans actually work to eliminate the dual school system.

In sum, that system is on the way out. It will take more time before it disappears completely, and before its effects on white and nonwhite individuals educated under it cease to influence each other's lives. Yet

there is hardly a responsible official in the country who still maintains that public policy and support should maintain separate school systems for different races. This is a genuine gain.

Today, however, we are increasingly concerned with school segregation in the cities, where our great concentrations of minorities live. And we are concerned in the cities with a form of segregation which grows not from dual schools but from patterns of living. The issues we confront in this type of segregation consume our energies, cast a shadow on our ideals, and confront us with a major argument about public policy.

On the one side of this argument are those who say that desegregation simply cannot be brought about in the near future. They point to Washington, D.C., with a Negro school population of over 90 percent, to New York and Chicago, with their 50 percent nonwhite school populations, and say that there just are not enough white youngsters to go around to produce desegregation. Therefore, they say, let's forget the impossible; let's concentrate enough money and services and experienced teachers in the ghetto schools to make them the best in the city, even if they <u>are</u> segregated. In effect, this viewpoint presents the case for schools which are separate, but <u>un</u>equal--unequal in the sense that they do more for minority group children than they do for the fortunate white majority.

On the other side are those who say that big-city segregation is <u>per se</u> so bad--so destructive of the children caught up in it--that compensatory education cannot begin to alleviate its evils. Segregation,

they say, denies a child the privilege of thinking of himself as a first-class citizen; no matter how excellent an education such a school offers him in an academic sense, it denies him that sense of equality with other children, that sense of personal dignity and self-confidence which is so important to achievement in school and beyond. Therefore, goes this side of the argument, let's bring every kind of legal, financial, and political pressure to bear on the single goal of integration, because that is the only solution to inequality of educational opportunity. According to this view, the only way Negroes will ever get good schools is to join the children whose white parents control the quality of the schools.

The proponents of both viewpoints can marshal platoons of statistics to support their contentions. I am not competent to evaluate this evidence or, for that reason, to argue from it. Neither, I might add, are many of the people who are quoting these figures most vociferously. But I am convinced--on the basis of common sense and on the basis of what our country professes to stand for--that we make a mistake to espouse either of these courses to the exclusion of the other.

It is obvious, as the advocates of compensatory education point out, that we cannot achieve full desegregation tomorrow. In some cities, where non-white school populations approach or exceed 50 percent, it is unlikely that we will have integrated schools for another generation. Yet no matter how unrealistic desegregation may seem in such cities, I must question whether compensatory education of the quality we seek is much easier to achieve.

Consider for a moment what we are talking about when we recommend compensatory education as the only answer. If it is to be genuine compensatory education--education that makes up for the failings of the home and for an entire heritage of failure and self-doubt--we are probably talking about massive per-pupil expenditures, about providing a great variety of special services ranging from health and psychological care to remedial education efforts. We are talking about remaking the relationship between the school and the home, and between the school and employment opportunity. We are talking about identifying and appointing that essential person who is in such short supply--the inspiring elementary school principal. We are talking about arrangements for re-training most teachers and for putting a city's best and most experienced instructors in its ghetto schools, which now get more than their share of uncertified, inexperienced, temporary teachers. We are talking about new curricular materials, some untried and some yet to be developed, as well as about revised methods of instruction. Particularly in the large cities of the East, we are talking about replacing school plants which--on the average--are nearly a quarter-century older than schools outside the city. And we are considering doing all these things for children whose families are on the move, children in schools where the enrollment often changes radically from year to year.

The school systems on which we would impose these tasks are under-financed, beset by self-appointed critics with every conceivable viewpoint, and ill-supported by the States in which they exist. Certainly they have

faults, but the major responsibility for those faults lies not on the doorstep of harrassed school officials; rather, it rests with every one of us who has paid lip-service to the importance of public education while allowing it to deteriorate.

With resources from the Federal Government, we have two years of initial effort behind us on this task of remaking education in the central city. We cannot at this point scientifically measure what we have achieved, but we know that there are hopeful signs. When President Johnson and the 89th Congress created a new alliance between the Federal government and the public schools, they took on no easy job for either party. They committed themselves to a long, difficult, expensive task of experimentation, service, and change--a task perhaps as difficult as desegregation.

In the practical sense, then, I do not think we have two alternatives. We must pursue both compensatory education and desegregated schools at the same time. And this is not, I hasten to point out, a prescription for fence-straddling or an invitation to inaction. A number of local school boards, given the option of using Federal funds to improve their schools, have chosen to couple compensatory programs with devices for increasing integration at the same time.

-- In Pittsburgh, the school administration is building five Great High Schools, each designed to serve a student population of about 5,000 from every social, economic, ethnic, and national group in the city. At the same time that these schools eliminate segregated student societies,

they will also produce higher quality education through bringing new resources to the service of all students.

-- In White Plains, New York, the school board decided in 1964 to attack de facto segregation. Every school, the board decided, would have no less than a 10 percent Negro enrolment and no more than 30 percent. In a recent study, the school system concluded that the program had benefited both white and Negro students academically, and that it has not led to any exodus of white students from the public schools.

-- In Evanston, Illinois, the school system has committed itself to a desegregation plan that will give every elementary school a Negro enrolment of between 15 and 25 percent. One feature of the plan, the conversion of a formerly all-Negro school to an integrated laboratory school operated in conjunction with Northwestern University, has been so popular that there is a waiting list of white parents anxious to send their children there.

-- In Berkeley, California, the school system has launched a program that combines busing with special instruction provided by parents, university graduate students, community volunteers, and an increased staff to blend compensatory education and

desegregation. Now under consideration by the school board is a plan that would desegregate all the city's schools next fall by classroom exchanges involving 4,300 of the district's 9,000 elementary school children.

Each of these efforts has been partially financed by Federal funds. Not one of them, however, was dictated by Federal policy or requirement. They are examples of community responsibility exercised on behalf of minority group Americans by enlightened local leadership. Most school boards today at least have the problem of segregation on their agenda. These school boards I have mentioned, as well as numerous others, are doing something about it. Ten years ago the segregation problem was not on the agenda at all except in a very few places.

We are faced with a variety of forms of segregation in American cities, each with peculiar local circumstances. A plan that works in White Plains, with 17 percent Negro student population, would be absurd in Washington, D.C., with over 90 percent. Plans for either of those cities would make little sense in Denver, where public education officials must accommodate a significant minority of Spanish-speaking children, as well as Negro and white children. Large cities have more aggravated and less manageable problems than medium-sized cities.

Perhaps in some cities, compensatory efforts will have earlier effect than those aimed at desegregation. In our basic policy commitments, however, we have no choice except to plan for and strive for desegregated schools. Compensatory education, whatever its immediate values, is only a partial measure. Although it encourages integration of the schools in the long run by improving services for all children, it offers no answer

for the young people who must wait in segregated schools for the millennium to arrive. We cannot allow the fact that the solution may be years ahead to erase the problem of segregation from our priority lists now.

What are the long-term prospects for desegregated schools?

I do not think we will ever have genuinely integrated education until we have a genuinely desegregated society. And such a society--one in which every man is free to succeed or fail on his merits, to qualify for a job on the basis of his ability alone, to live where he chooses as long as he can pay the rent or make the mortgage payment--seems a long way off. We have made progress in every one of these areas during the 1960's, but we have far to go. The question that confronts us is whether we can move fast enough in the years immediately ahead to keep the hopes our small progress has generated from turning into bitter frustration and hate.

It is a curious thing that a little progress often brings a disproportionate amount of frustration, anger, and violence. Every white person knows other whites who--reacting to the riots in our cities and to the continual demands of our deprived minorities--ask, "What more do <u>they</u> want?" And every black person, I suppose, knows at least one Negro who proclaims his willingness to blow the country up tomorrow if Whitey does not come across today.

Such white reactions--in the case of persons who felt at least an initial sympathy with the civil rights movement--stem partially from a defective sense of our Nation's history. Resenting a riot, of course, does not require any historical sense; a riot is just plain wrong. But

whites who ask, "Why don't they work their way up the way we did?" might be chagrined to discover that American Negroes are "working their way up" in a fashion not dissimilar to that previously engaged in by a number of white minorities: through a combination of strenuous toil, political pressure, and outbreaks of violence.

We must realize, it seems to me, that American Negroes were denied any legitimate outlet for their special interests during the first 200 years of their residence here, and that for the next century, their rights as citizens were more theoretical than real. Now, with the support of the administration, the last two Congresses and the Federal courts, American Negroes have fought for and gained their first real vision of the possibilities of justice. For 300 years they have had no hope; now they have not only hope, but some tangible fruits to prove the value of hope. It is not in the least surprising that they should resent even 24 hours more of delay.

But the legitimate uses of power and the understandable frustrations of American Negroes do not justify the cries of those on the violent fringe who advocate extorting justice through destruction. It is as important for such extremists to realize that they are delaying the day of complete equality, as it is for whites to realize that these extremists consist only of the clamorous few.

Both Negro extremism and extreme white reaction to it complicate the major social dilemma of our lives. When we view the various obstacles standing between us and a genuinely open society, I suspect many of us at

times are tempted to lose our nerve and our determination to follow through on the course we began plotting in 1954. Members of the majority may question whether achieving any ideal is worth the turmoil that this particular ideal has already cost us. Members of minority groups, knowing that they are outnumbered, may worry whether, at some point, the majority will say, "Enough. We are not yet ready for integration. The clock will have to stand still for another generation."

It is at this point that I would return to my earlier remarks about the force and function of an ideal.

The ideal of equality has given Americans trouble ever since our Nation was founded--not just as regards Negro Americans but with other minorities as well. It has pushed us into one bitter controversy after another, sometimes setting American against American and generating vast amounts of hostility. It has picked fights for us, fights that many men in every time would have preferred to avoid.

But we have won each of those fights. Each victory has renewed our national energies, renewed our national conviction that we can lick our problems one by one. We know that the experience of failure has a profound effect on an individual: if repeated again and again, it makes him doubt his own abilities. The experience of repeated success has an analogous effect: it makes a man capable of daring greater things than he would normally attempt.

I suspect that experience develops a similar sense of invincibility or of inability in Nations. The people of the United States, by having the courage to confront at various times in their history the most

agonizing problems of social policy and domestic practice, have built up a winning streak that has enabled us to face fear at home and abroad with quiet confidence in our own ability to win once again.

At this time in our history, we face another crisis of national courage. We face a fight which, in the belief of many Americans, it would be nice to avoid. Do we really have to go through this again when, for most of us, life is reasonably comfortable? Do we really have to sustain these battles over busing and school redistricting and teacher assignment? Do we have to scrap all the time about open housing ordinances and equal employment opportunity; do we have to penalize ourselves for more taxes? Isn't there any way to avoid such a grievous, expensive, tiring, and passionate exercise as desegregating America?

There is not. The legacy of our national ideals leaves us no choice of goals. The argument over the educational merits of desegregation is, in a sense, irrelevant. It is fortunate that studies of the effects of desegregated education show us that certain learning gains emerge from it. But even if the studies disclosed no such gains, we would <u>still</u> be morally committed to desegregation.

It seems to me that in designing school policy that responds to that commitment--that constructively serves youngsters from both the minority and the majority groups--we have three fundamental propositions to keep in mind.

1. Local boards of education must accept their responsibility for using all the resources at their command--Federal and State, as well as local--to improve education and reduce segregation at the same time. These local boards confront countless decisions each year on such questions as location of schools,

the design of facilities, teacher-assignment policies, and school organization patterns. These issues are not separate unto themselves, or at least need not be. The possible alternatives can also bear on educational improvement and school desegregation. I would hope that school boards would keep these two goals constantly in mind in all their decisions, and address them simultaneously and with equal vigor.

2. State departments of education must begin to accept more responsibility for school desegregation as they develop a greater capacity for improving quality. Some departments--in those States which maintained dual school systems--have begun to do so, after being prodded by the Federal government. Some others, including Michigan, California, Massachusetts, New York, and Connecticut, have exercised leadership in school desegregation of their own free will. Nevertheless, such State departments are a distinct minority.

3. The Federal Government must continue vigorously to carry out the provisions of Titles IV and VI of the Civil Rights Act. I can guarantee that this will happen under the new administrative arrangements set up in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare for Title VI responsibility. Plans are underway for nationwide policy guides to Title VI so that school districts both North and South have a clearer picture of their obligations. The Federal Government must also encourage the constructive use

of the programs it makes available to States and localities as leverage which can at the same time improve education and promote the desegregation of schools. The Federal Government literally cannot and certainly should not demand reductions of segregation beyond those required by law. At the same time, since equality of educational opportunity is closely connected to the removal of segregation, the Federal Government must not stand in the way of decisions by local school districts and by individual States to pursue desegregation as an essential element in improving their schools.

To assist States and local agencies in this effort, I can announce today that we are strengthening operations of Title IV of the Civil Rights Act.

We have created a new Division of Equal Educational Opportunities in the Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education and appointed Mr. Gregory R. Anrig to head that division. We are providing this new division with 70 new staff persons to provide greatly increased technical assistance to local agencies requesting their service. More than half of the enlarged staff will be assigned to regional Office of Education offices to be available to work directly in the field.

Only if the agencies in this country responsible for the conduct of our schools move simultaneously toward quality education and equal educational opportunity will they give practical meaning to the proposition

with which we started this discussion, the splendid American proposition "that all men are created equal." Maintaining the ideals that accompanied this Nation's birth demands a dedication to law and principle that we are once again called upon to display.

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